A Painful Legacy:

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Canadian Government Discussions on Residential Schools

Lukas Zetterlund

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Abstract

Indigenous language rights in Canada have been historically marginalized, with the residential school system being integral to their attempted erasure. These schools stripped indigenous children away from their homes to undergo forced assimilation grounded by colonial language policy which saw the indigenous peoples as impediments to their progress. The schools have since closed and the Canadian government has apologized for their role, deeming them as part of the nation's grim history. This paper explores how this shift in discourse occurred and what it says of Canadian language policy. Using critical discourse analysis, nexus analysis, and language management theories to analyze historical government data, the results find that initial shifts in discourse were superficial, while more contemporary discourse marked a unanimous shift away from past ideology. Colonial language policy was discontinued with this stark discursive change, yet despite vocal support for indigenous languages rights, the long lack of actual policy suggests that lingering colonial legacies of language values may be firmly rooted in Canadian society.

1 Introduction and Aim

Language policy and planning in Canada has historically centered around English and French, with little attention given to indigenous language rights (Burnaby, 2006; Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 28). The *Constitution Act, 1867*, was one of the first legislations to recognize language rights for English and French speakers, granting their use in institutions (Burnaby, 2006). Yet the limitations that would be placed on the French language in the ensuing years would lead to unrest among French Canadians, culminating in the creation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) to address the issue, which led to the *Official Languages Act* (1969) and Canada's multiculturalism policy (1971) (Burnaby, 2006; Haque & Patrick, 2015, pp. 29-30). These raised French to an equal status with English (which together now formed the two major languages of Canada), and gave support for immigrants in maintaining their native tongues through immersion programs (Burnaby, 2006). Though indigenous groups fought to be heard and have language rights granted throughout this period, they were ultimately excluded from the deliberations (Haque & Patrick, 2015, pp. 31-32). Increased indigenous resistance however brought significant attention to their disparity in society, culminating in a government response in the form of the *White Paper on Indian Policy* (1969) (Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 32, 34). The White Paper's agenda however was largely an assimilationist one, which again discounted indigenous input (Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 34). The later *Constitution Act, 1982* put forth "a number of human, political and linguistic rights" (Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 35) in addition to "constitutional recognition to 'aboriginal rights' and 'treaty rights'", though language rights were still ignored (Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 35). Indigenous movements have continued to strive for government support for the protection and revitalization of their languages, which has been promised with the 2019 *Indigenous Languages Act* (Haque & Patrick, 2015, pp. 36-37; Government of Canada, 2019).

Since the arrival of colonial settlers to Canada, the indigenous population have endured infringements on their rights in a variety of areas, largely as a result of contending with policies of assimilation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015a, p. 3). One such assimilationist method was with the residential schools which targeted indigenous children, removing them from their families and sending them to boarding schools ostensibly designed to educate and prepare them for Canadian settler society (TRC, 2015a, p. 4). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015a) determined that the schools largely failed to do

so, and instead disenfranchised the children from their original culture and community (pp. 4-5; Gebhard, 2017, p. 4). In addition, the schools have been described as sites where cultural genocide occurred, and where numerous abuses were committed against the pupils (TRC, 2015a, p. 3; Gebhard, 2017, p. 3). The Canadian government has since apologized for the schools, acknowledging them as a period of wrongdoing in Canada's history (Government of Canada, 2010). From originally championing these schools as a solution to the "Indian problem" (TRC, 2015a, pp. 199-200), to now openly stating regret for their existence, the shift in the Canadian government's representation of these schools has been sharp.

Approaching these residential schools as a form of language policy, this study employs the language management theories of Bernard Spolsky (2009; 2021), Robert Phillipson (2010), and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1999; 2010), among other researchers, in order to uncover and understand the factors and attitudes that form language policies. Using critical discourse analysis and the guidance of Scollon and Scollon's (2004) nexus analysis on government discussions of the schools throughout Canada's history, this study aims to explore how the discourse of residential schools outlines change in Canadian language policy. The study focuses on the discussions pertaining to residential schools and their purpose as discussed by the members of the Canadian government, using historical government data dating from the schools' inception to the present day. To guide the study, the following research question has been developed:

- How can the change in Canadian language policy be seen through the discourse of residential schools?

2 Background

2.1 Residential schools

Though boarding schools had existed in Canada since the 1830s, the term "residential schools" largely refers to the state-sponsored boarding schools that were established across Canada in the 1880s and run by Christian churches of different denominations (Marshall & Gallant, 2021). These schools were initially referred to as "industrial schools," though they soon became indistinguishable from the existing boarding schools, and both became what would be known as the "residential schools" (Miller, 1996, p. 140; Raptis, 2011, pp. 522-523). Before Canadian settlers imposed these education systems, the indigenous peoples had their own systems to pass down their knowledge and culture to their children (Robson, 2013, p. 70). Around 1870, the

Canadian government began to establish schools on indigenous reserves, known as day schools, which had goals to assimilate the indigenous peoples (Raptis, 2011, pp. 521-522). This development was inspired by the notion of the "Indian problem," (TRC, 2015a, pp. 199-200; Lorenz, 2016, p. 111) a thread of discourse which discussed the indigenous peoples as a group in need of management on account of their perceived inability to do so themselves. However, as indigenous children still remained in their native communities and retained their cultural links, officials regarded the progress of day schools as slow and ineffective (Raptis, 2011, p. 522). They soon favored the residential school system, which took children away from their families in order to more effectively assimilate them into the Canadian settler society (Raptis, 2011, p. 522; TRC, 2015a, p. 3). Isolated from their families, the children were taught in shabby buildings by ill-trained staff of limited numbers, which fostered an environment where physical and sexual abuse went unchecked (TRC, 2015a, pp. 4-5). Food was meager yet discipline and schedules were strict and harsh, which served to make the children themselves sustain the unmaintained buildings (TRC, 2015a, p. 5). Regarding the schools' educational aims, the TRC (2015a) stated that they were "limited and confused," reflecting "a low regard for the intellectual capabilities of Aboriginal people" (p. 5). The pupils were taught in either English or French, while expressing themselves in their own cultures and languages was punished (TRC, 2015a, p.5; Marshall & Gallant, 2021). Furthermore, as a measure of control, siblings were separated upon entering, and marriages were arranged for some upon leaving (TRC, 2015a, p. 5).

The number of residential schools began to decline following the 1960s, resulting from a shift in government policy from assimilation to integrating indigenous children into regional schools (TRC, 2015b, pp. 10-12). Though most schools were discontinued in the 1970s, the last school to close was in 1997 (Stahl, 2014, p. 4767; TRC, 2015b, pp. 12, 105). Ultimately, the Canadian government has estimated that around 150,000 children had been sent to residential schools, about a third of all indigenous children throughout the period (Robson, 2013, p. 72; Government of Canada, 2021). The schools have left many of its surviving pupils with psychological damage and long-lasting trauma that has passed down through generations, in addition to contributing to the endangerment of indigenous languages (Robson, 2013, p. 72; Rice, 2022). After initially refusing to do so, then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued the government's first public apology for the residential schools in 2008, after a unanimous motion was passed in parliament (Parrott, 2020). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

was established the same year, and their final report was later released in 2015, outlining the abuses faced by the children and deeming the schools as a form of "cultural genocide" (Moran, 2021). Subsequent discoveries only reinforced those findings; throughout 2021, mass graves suspected to belong to pupils were discovered on the sites of former schools, prompting more government apologies, increased public attention into the matter, and a long-awaited apology from the Pope for the Catholic church's role in the schools (Gilmore, 2021; Shivaram, 2022).

2.2 Canadian indigenous language policy

The language rights of the indigenous peoples of Canada have been repeatedly marginalized and denied throughout history due to language policy being influenced by colonial discourses. Historically, the relations between the indigenous peoples and the Canadian settlers have been long steeped in matters of racial exclusion and categorization, and settler languages French and English were cast as 'civilizing' languages (Haque & Patrick, 2015, pp. 28-29). The changes brought to social values and structures as a result of the RCBB's response to Québecian nationalism ultimately established the English and French communities as the "founding races" (Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 30) of Canada, a conclusion which ultimately disregarded the presence of indigenous communities. Despite indigenous groups voicing concern for inclusion, the commission's own research into indigenous matters constructed the varied indigenous languages as ones that were in decline, serving as barriers to government services, education, and employment (Haque & Patrick, 2015, pp. 31-32). The commission's research reinforced the myths of settler colonialism, wherein indigenous languages and cultures were cast as primitive and soon to disappear, while western values were seen as superior and modern, thus reinforcing their dominant hierarchy (Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 32). Though backlash from indigenous groups brought the granting of rights in the form of the *White Paper on Indian Policy* (1969) and the *Constitution Act, 1982*, they continued to reflect the colonial discourse and hierarchies that had since influenced policy (Haque & Patrick, 2015, pp. 34-35). Notably, the latter was disproportionate in addressing language rights, as speakers of French and English had their rights expanded with guaranteed social services in their language, while indigenous language rights had no recognition (Haque & Patrick, 2015, p. 35). More recently, the *Indigenous Languages Act* was passed in 2019, "which is intended to support the reclamation, revitalization, maintaining and strengthening of Indigenous languages in Canada" (Government of Canada, 2019).

3 Theoretical considerations

3.1 Discourse

This study adopts the approach Scollon and Scollon (2004) take in defining the term discourse, wherein at the simplest level, discourse is "the use of language in social interaction" (p. 2). The meaning is thereafter expanded upon to include James Paul Gee's (1999) definition:

> different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language 'stuff,' such as different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using symbols, tools, and objects in the right places and at the right times so as to enact and recognize different identities and activities, give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain way, make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbol systems and ways of knowing over others. (as cited in Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 4)

In this sense, discourse becomes more encompassing, covering not just the language of social communication but also the potential for certain meanings to persist, grow dominant, and influence social life.

3.2 Language Management Theory

The theories Bernard Spolsky (2009, 2021) presents on language management are utilized in this study to investigate language policy. Spolsky (2009) identifies that language management occurs differently in separate domains, or social spaces, and that the features of language may be managed internally, or may be affected by actions outside of the domain (pp. 2-3). A domain is further defined by three main characteristics: the participants, who are characterized "by their social roles and relationships" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 3); the location, which bridges the social reality to the physical reality; and the topic, the appropriate conversational subjects within a domain (Spolsky, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, speaking on language policies, Spolsky (2009, 2021) describes the three interrelated components that constitute a policy: the practice, belief, and management. The language practices are the actions and behaviors that are noticeable when people use language, such as the language variety a speaker may employ for different occasions (Spolsky, 2009, p. 4; 2021, p. 9). Language beliefs, or ideology, are central to the management of languages, as the most significant of these beliefs inform the policy on how it should uphold the concerned language. In other words, the values a community may place on a language variety can influence how it is perceived, for instance leading it to be valued or stigmatized (Spolsky,

2009, p. 4; 2021, p. 9). Lastly, language management is the actions made by figures of authority to alter the language practices and beliefs of participants in a domain (Spolsky, 2009, p. 4; 2021, p. 9).

Spolsky (2021) sees that language policy and management begins with the individual, before other social levels like the family, the school, and eventually the nation, intersect and conflict with each other (pp. 9-10, 44). The individual's language beliefs are central to their practice and management of language, as one's attitudes towards other speakers can shape their evaluations of language (Spolsky, 2021, p. 12). Positive or meaningful exposure to different varieties can result in an expanded repertoire through the individual's motivation and self-management of language (Spolsky, 2021, p. 12). The family home forms the first linguistic domain the individual is exposed to, serving to establish their initial repertoire (Spolsky, 2021, p. 13, 16). Spolsky (2021) determines that the family home is "probably the most important domain for language maintenance: languages are endangered when a language is no longer passed on to babies and young children" (p. 11). After the home, the school comes next in influencing a speaker's repertoire (Spolsky, 2021, p. 26). A main impact on the individual is the language the school has chosen to be the medium of instruction, though additional language instruction and the languages used by peers also play a role (Spolsky, 2021, p. 26). The institution behind selecting the language of instruction is also of importance; "the manager may be the national or regional government, a local school board, a religious authority, the parents or the teacher" (Spolsky, 2021, p. 26), who may each have different ideological goals. On the macro level of the nation, Spolsky (2021) points out the large influence the nation has on language policy (p. 163), though "the governments of modern nation states tend to prefer monolingual hegemony and try to encourage the use of a single national language" (p. 7). Ideally, as Spolsky (2021) advises, the nation state should base their language management on "the language practices of the nation as a speech community and its beliefs about the role and value of the individual language varieties" (163). Furthermore, the underlying ideology and values of a government's language management can be understood through "[a] description of the sociolinguistic profile of a nation" (Spolsky, 2021, p. 167).

In the aim of this study, the concept of domains is applied to the data to understand how the Canadian government's residential school language policy has developed, identifying the participants who play parts in disseminating discourse, the particular locations in which they do

so, and the appropriate topics that they discuss. Furthermore, the language practices employed by the government, how these practices outline the government's beliefs towards their own languages and non-native languages, the management the government took towards domain participants, and how these three factors developed through time, serve to outline how the language policy has developed. In addition, the data is examined along Spolsky's (2021) spectrum of language management, from the individual to the nation. Though these concepts are particularly centered on the aspect of language, the theory can be used to elucidate the underlying attitudes behind the policy decisions.

3.2.1 National language management

Investigating the management of indigenous languages by colonial powers can be understood with Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas' (2010) research on language repression. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (2010) trace the supremacy of languages like English to the colonial era, where minority languages were marginalized to allow the domination of English as a global language (pp. 79-80). Education perpetuates the dominance of languages like English, and teaching indigenous and minority (IM) children "in a dominant language can cause linguistic and educational harm" (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010, p. 85). Such mediums of teaching create barriers to education for IM children, and work to erase minority languages and linguistic diversity (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010, pp. 85-86). With few exceptions, most IM students are taught in a dominant language medium, leading to serious social and physical harm, and contributing to "linguistic and cultural genocide" (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010, p. 86). Moreover, today around 50% of the near 7000 languages in the world are under threat of vanishing, most of these being indigenous languages (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010, pp. 77-78). These circumstances are closely linked to the conditions imposed by nation states explored by Stephen May (2018). While ethnic minority culture and practices are purported to lead to the fragmentation of the society, the dominant national culture is framed as modern and cohesive for the society (May, 2018, p. 240). The hegemonic processes of the majority power thus normalize the idea of a homogenized nation, and excludes minorities from "important power resources" (May, 2018, p. 242). Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas' (2010) framework of colonial language management applies to the example of residential schools, outlining how colonial powers enforces dominant languages upon a minority group, ensuring the language's dominance

and the repression of indigenous minority languages. Similarly, May's (2018) discussion of the nation state serves as an understanding of the language beliefs that are behind such management, which in the case of this study, highlights the ideologies that led to the creation of residential schools.

The model of education employed in residential schools can be understood through Skutnabb-Kangas' (1999) framework of minority education models. Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) puts forth three goals that good educational programs should achieve: "(1) high levels of multilingualism; (2) a fair chance of achieving academically at school; and (3) strong, positive multilingual and multicultural identity and positive attitudes toward self and others" (p. 42). Educational programs can fall into three models which assess the achievement of said goals: non-models, which achieve none of the goals and negate goals 2 and 3, often resulting in monolingualism; weak models, which may achieve better academic results but largely do not fulfill the goals, particularly goal 1; and strong models, which achieve the three goals (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 42). Non-models and weak models are the most commonly used in the world (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 43). Such models "violate linguistic and cultural human rights and participate in committing linguistic genocide" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 43), and lead minorities to lower academic success than majority children, as well as unemployment and crime. Historically, the education of ethnic minorities and indigenous people was approached with indifference, as they were taught in the same manner and language that majority children were (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 43). The model lives on in more contemporary nation-states where education has played a role to integrate and homogenize minorities to fit the dominant group, which is presented as a non-ethnic norm (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 44). Failures of minorities in education are typically blamed upon the minorities themselves, despite the social, cultural, and linguistic barriers they face (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 45). On educational programs, some non-models or weak models employ submersion programs, which enforce the high-status majority language as the medium of instruction (MOI), or transitional programs, in which mother tongue MOI is used solely to build knowledge of the dominant language, an MOI they will eventually transfer to (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, pp. 45-47). Such programs can cause minority struggle, creating gaps between parent and child and the devaluation of the mother tongue. In addition, Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) determines that "[a]ll non-models and weak models for minority children fit the United Nations' definition of linguistic genocide" (p. 47). On the

other hand, strong models utilize a variety of programs which teach through minority languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, pp. 49-51). Such programs fare well in relation to the three goals, that is, "high levels of bi- or multilingualism, a fair chance of success in school achievement, and positive multilingual/multicultural identities and attitudes" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, p. 51). These models outline the education standards of ideal and non-ideal educational goals, which acts as a guide in determining the educational models of residential schools and understanding where these models may fail to support language diversity.

Spolsky's (2009, 2021) theories of language management can be further understood through historical examples of language politics. High language beliefs, particularly for English, have had a gatekeeping effect on different national education policies (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014, p. 189). In Hong Kong, a switch from English MOI to Chinese language MOI resulted in students performing better academically and an increase in access to prestigious universities, which previously was limited to the English-speaking elite (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014, p. 196). However, despite the increase in higher education access, the resulting decline in English MOI led to citizen demand that it be reinstated, which was subsequently granted, something which Tollefson and Tsui (2014) regard as a reversion to the prior policy (pp. 196-197). In India, English has contributed to societal divide, as it takes on a superior status as the "language of the elite" (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014, p. 200). Despite policy that intends to make English accessible to all, success rates in English classes are low, perpetuating the language's elite status and fueling divide and discrimination between the English-speaking and non-English-speaking population (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014, pp. 200-201). In Malaysia, an effort to boost the status of the national Malay language created tensions with the country's ethnic groups, resulting in public universities using Malay MOI and private universities using English MOI (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014, pp. 201-202). Private sector jobs favored those with high English proficiency, which the ethnic minority Chinese and Indian groups excelled in (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014, p. 202). As a result, the Malaysian government switched to an English MOI in education to increase prospects for the Malay group (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014, pp. 201-202). Moreover, in Turkey, the Kurdish minority undergoes language repression as a wider part of the Turkish state's denial of Kurdish claims of being a distinct people (May, 2018, pp. 245-246). Historically, Kurdish language rights have been restricted, being seen as a threat to the dominant Turkish state's national unity and security (May, 2018, pp. 245-246). Though some measures have eased, many limitations remain, such as

Kurdish children attending Kurdish-medium schools in Turkey who "do not even have the right to study Kurdish as a subject in school" (May, 2018, p. 246). These examples illustrate how strong beliefs in dominant languages can influence a society. In the case of a global language like English, speech communities add it to their repertoire as part of their language practice, influencing language management on a larger, national scale, which has subsequently contributed to societal divide. Turkey's language repression of the Kurdish minority language in schools mirrors the control of language in residential schools, highlighting the effects national language beliefs have on minorities.

3.2.2 Language shift and language revitalization

Language revitalization refers to the "activities designed to cultivate new speakers in situations in which intergenerational transmission has been so severely disrupted" (McCarty, 2018, p. 358). A wide cause of this language loss is by language shift, which, different from gradual language change, refers to when speakers favor a more widely communicated language than their mother tongue (McCarty, 2018 pp. 355-356). Language shift involves the breakdown of language transmission structures; "[l]anguages are not *re*placed but *dis*placed" (McCarty, 2018, p. 356). A prime cause of language shift has been education conducted solely in dominant languages, which restricts other languages, such as in the case of residential schools (McCarty, 2018, p. 356). Language-restrictive policies have had numerous detrimental educational, economic, and social effects, and thus, language revitalization goes beyond just language, but links to minority struggles and power asymmetries (McCarty, 2018, p. 356). One form of revitalization is Indigenous revitalization immersion, "in which at least 50% of subject matter instruction takes place through the target (second or additional) language" (McCarty, 2018, p. 363). The learners of indigenous-language immersion are largely from marginalized communities "associated with low achievement" (McCarty, 2018, p. 364). Though revitalization immersion has achieved strong results, it still faces many challenges (McCarty, 2018, pp. 364-365). For some, few speakers of the language and the lack of teaching materials impedes education, while lingering colonial ideologies and policies that hold language rights back diminish the language's value (McCarty, 2018, p. 366). Similarly, the high value of languages of wider communication like English sets it into conflict with major national languages of a country, which in turn diminishes a country's indigenous languages (McCarty, 2018, p. 367). Language shift is applicable to the detrimental

effects residential schools have had on indigenous languages, while language revitalization relates to the status of these languages in the aftermath of the schools. The level of revitalization achieved by speakers and supported by the government is telling of the shift in the language beliefs and management that diminished the languages in the first place.

4 Design of the present study

4.1 Data

To analyze the historic government attitudes toward residential schools, archive data was examined. The first set of data was the Indian Affairs Annual Reports, which were published from 1864 to 1990 (Government of Canada, 2022). These yearly reports were publications by the Canadian government which documented information concerning the status and government decisions regarding the indigenous peoples (Government of Canada, 2022). These publications also included reports by government officials known as Indian agents, who inspected different schools and establishments related to the indigenous peoples and reported on their progress in regards to the government's intentions. Starting in the 1917 report however, these reports were reduced to brief summaries, which largely removed the detailed info that these documents contained about the schools (Department of Indian Affairs, 1917, p. 9). As such, a second set of data was required: the House of Commons debates which date from 1867 to present. These debates are records of the dialogue between members of parliament (MPs) since the 1st session of parliament (Parliament of Canada, n.d.-a; n.d.-b).

4.2 Methodological background

The study employs Norman Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method to analyze the data. Fairclough's model analyzes discursive events as occurring in three dimensions: the text, the discursive practice, and the social practice. The text dimension of discourse looks at the linguistic features of a text, looking at the structure of a text as well as choices in grammar and vocabulary, the "concrete linguistic objects" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 29). The discursive dimension is concerned with the production, circulation, and consumption of discourse within a society, which can be performed via intertextuality (Blommaert, 2005, p. 29). The third dimension, social practice, concerns the power relations or hegemonic processes that contribute to imparting dominant discourses (Blommaert, 2005, pp. 29-30). Hegemonies are not

static however, and change in such processes can allow discursive change to be witnessed when discourse is "represented, re-spoken, or re-written" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 30). CDA serves as a useful method due to its capabilities of uncovering discourse patterns that relate to social structures and its potential to enact social change (Blommaert, 2005, p. 25).

Ron and Suzie Wong Scollon's (2004) method for conducting a nexus analysis also serves as a guide for this study. Though Scollon and Scollon's (2004) nexus analysis is intended as a year-long ethnographic study, the field-guide presented for conducting such an analysis is described as being applicable to "short-term studies … by focusing on just one or several aspects of a full analysis" (p. 152). The analysis starts with the researcher engaging with the measures most influential to the social issue at hand. This involves plotting out the cycles of discourse and cycles of people, as well as the "social actions and social actors which are crucial in the production of a social issue" (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 153). Social action takes place with the crossing of the historical actors relevant to the action, the order of their interaction, and the discourse that allowed such action to occur (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, p. 153). To identify this nexus of practice, Scollon and Scollon (2004) outlines five practices to conduct: "establish the social issue you will study;" "find the crucial social actors," those involved in the issue and how their identities, roles and statuses contribute to the production of discourse; "observe the interaction order," the way in which actions occur within the area of study; "determine the most significant cycles of discourse;" and "establish your zone of identification," which is done when the researcher performs the preceding actions (Scollon & Scollon, 2004, pp. 154-156). This framework is followed to guide the employment of CDA.

4.3 Procedure

All the data sets were held in publicly available databases which allowed keyword-searching. To navigate these vast databases, some keywords that were used were "industrial," "residential," and "indian school(s)," and "indian children." These keywords were determined through initial exploration with the data. Most discussions surrounding residential schools paid explicit reference to the schools as "residential schools," as well as "industrial schools" and "boarding schools" in the earlier periods. Moreover, when "indian children" were the topic, the discussions were almost exclusively focused on education, schools, and language values. While the annual reports were held in a single database, the House of Commons debates were held in two different

Hansard databases. The first contained debates ranging from the 1st Parliament (November 1867) to the 35th (February 1996), while the latter contained the remaining sessions of parliament to the present day. Given the availability of plain text data in the latter Hansard database and the Indian Affairs database, additional keyword-searches like "language," "English," and "French" were utilized. These keywords, when the topic was already on indigenous peoples, narrowed the data down to discussions on schools and language values; mentions of English, French, and language, would tend to be centered around the education of indigenous children. Discussions that related to residential schools and language values were then extracted and collected in separate documents. Scollon and Scollon's (2004) nexus analysis method was then followed to determine what threads of discourse were most prevalent and which actors were spreading such ideas. The discourses that were most widespread and influential in discussions were singled out as the most dominant. Statements of the actors that encapsulated these discourses were then selected as the examples found in the results section.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 1880s to 1920s: "The Indian problem"

At the onset of the rollout of residential schools, the 1st Canadian Prime Minister John A. Macdonald (1883) discussed the purpose of the schools as the following:

> When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly impressed upon myself, as head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men... (p. 1107)

Macdonald (1883) serves as one of the first crucial social actors by imparting the dominant "Indian problem" discourse, which saw that indigenous values were not in line with those of the majority white population and thus had to be changed to fit in with the society. Macdonald's (1883) statement fits May's (2018) discussion of the nation state as presenting itself as modern and unifying, thus serving as a reason to enact homogenizing policy. The "thought of white men" (Macdonald, 1883, p. 1107) is presented as natural and contains high, inherent values of the settler languages. Moreover, the stated intention to separate children from the domain of family indicates the policy of language management to come.

Macdonald's views were soon corroborated by MP Hector Langevin (1883), who states: "if you wish to educate these children you must separate them from their parents during the time they are being educated. If you leave them in the family … they still remain savages" (p. 1376). Similarly, in the Indian Affairs Annual Reports of 1883, commissioner E. Dewdney of the Northwest Territories reported similar ideology on the schools:

> By the children being separated from their parents and properly and regularly instructed not only in the rudiments of the English language, but also in trades and agriculture, so that what is taught may not be readily forgotten, I can but assure myself that a great end will be attained for the permanent and lasting benefit of the Indian. (Department of Indian Affairs, 1883, p. 104)

Headed by MacDonald's values, these MPs form the next set of crucial social actors, reiterating Macdonald's "Indian problem" discourse as part of the interaction order. The separation of parent from child is justified on account of the "Indian" being a "savage," indicating a low regard for the people; their values and language were seen as miasmic, such that even the ability to read and write was seen as compromised if learned in the vicinity of the family domain. This low opinion is further expressed by Dewdney (1883) who implies the children are not educated "properly and regularly" by their parents (Department of Indian Affairs, p. 104). In contrast, the Canadian nation continues to be presented as supreme and the Canadian colonist education is deemed to be a lasting answer to the issue of the indigenous population. The values espoused by MacDonald (1883) are now shown to consist of the teaching of English (and French), portraying them as part of a solution to the perceived problem, therefore indicating the strong beliefs in these languages which serve as reason for its subsequent enforcement.

The employment of language management in the school domain is highlighted in reports from the Department of Indian Affairs. Speaking of the Shingwauk and Wawanosh homes, official Edward T. Wilson related a report from a school inspector:

> Not a word of Indian is heard from our Indian boys after six months in the institution. All their talk among themselves while at play, is in English. Even those who knew not a word of the English tongue when they came to us last fall, now talk nothing else among themselves. We bring this about principally by great strictness - sometimes punishing heavily any old pupil, who presumes to break the rule. (Department of Indian Affairs, 1884, p. 24)

English is shown to be strictly enforced, while indigenous languages are harshly repressed. This language management constitutes what Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) calls a non-model submersion program (p. 45), which kills language diversity with a monolingual approach and leads to linguistic genocide. This is in direct contrast with the indigenous day schools featured in the

same report, which, while also non- or weak models, taught English and French together with indigenous languages (Department of Indian Affairs, 1884, pp. xxxviii, 57). Language management is further elaborated upon in a report on the Fort Providence Roman Catholic Boarding School, which explains that "the pupils are not allowed to speak in their native tongue even in recreations, if it is at all possible for them to express themselves in English or French" (Department of Indian Affairs, 1915, p. 191). This further outlines the measures taken to enforce English management, which presumes an at-all-times policing that includes the regulation of peer language to disallow any child's mother tongue from being retained. Such practices also outline how the national ideology of the state has instructed the school domain to strictly regulate the language of the individual, who is now susceptible since being removed from the family domain.

English-only enforcement likewise strengthens any high value of the language. For instance, principal Thomas Clarke, reporting on the Battleford Industrial School, discussed his promise that English will soon be widely used, stating:

> Another important factor which strengthens such a promise may be found, is the mixture of Cree and Assiniboine pupils, there being no similarity between the languages spoken by these two tribes - the English language therefore becomes, as a knowledge of it increases, the natural, in fact the only medium of communication in daily intercourse: the older pupils all speak English fluently. (Department of Indian Affairs, 1887, p. 102)

In this school, English was utilized as a common language for the children of two different tribes who could not communicate. English is thus portrayed as being a natural and inevitable language and portrayed as having high value; the indigenous languages are thus shown as non-unifying, convoluted, and in decline: modes of thought which extend from the nation state ideology. As such, advancements made in English were portrayed positively, such as with English proficiency being regularly grouped with appraisals of the children as intelligent: "the children all speak English, and are exceptionally bright and intelligent" (Department of Indian Affairs, 1883, p. 93); "I found English universally spoken, and if I addressed a pupil on any subject, would always receive an intelligent answer" (Department of Indian Affairs, 1900, p. 394). Moreover, one report on the Squamish Boarding School states: "all pupils without exception have made gratifying progress; the Indian language has been eradicated, and English is spoken by all the children in the school" (Department of Indian Affairs, 1905, p. 414). Aside from the rather open view of the Canadian government's intention for indigenous languages, the amalgamation of the numerous

indigenous languages as simply "Indian language" also highlights the low regard towards them. Such results illustrate Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas' (2010) and May's (2018) discussion of colonial era language policy where hegemonic processes boost dominant language values, which erase indigenous language through dominant language-teaching.

Within this early period of residential schools, the crucial social actors formed an interaction order which spread dominant discourse to enforce language management: the prime minister imparted his ideology on language and values, the parliament members endorsed these views in their own statements, and the Indian agents, principals, and teachers enforced these beliefs in the school domain. This resulted in settler languages English and French being managed to supplant and erase the native languages of the children. The most significant cycle of discourse is that of the "Indian problem", which stems from the hegemonic values of the nation state as natural and is ingrained into the language beliefs and management policies. From the individual now isolated in the state-controlled school domain, their language is limited to the dominant one. Their removal from the family domain disrupted the traditional indigenous systems of education, which facilitates this colonial education system in erasing the indigenous self.

5.2 1930s to 1960s: "The problem of Indian education"

In the discussions of residential schools in the House of Commons debates past the 1920s, MPs began to raise concerns with the schools, though the schools' purpose was still largely approved. MP Neill (1937) positioned residential schools as superior to day schools, citing examples that on the reserve, indigenous parents have "no discipline" and do not "enforce going to school" (Neill, 1937, p. 2871). MP MacNicol (1939) discussed the situation of a "very bright young woman" who returned from an Indian training school, stating that:

> She came to a cottage or hut ten feet by twelve feet. Her father and mother and the three or four other members of the family lived in that small hut. Under such conditions these young people will merely revert to what they were before they went away. (p. 4707)

Earlier, MacNicol (1939) had expressed his concerns for the indigenous people, wondering "why is it that the Indians, who have been taken care of by the government and treated more or less as children, are apparently unable to go out and take care of themselves" (pp. 4706-4707). Neill (1937) and MacNicol (1939) continue as the next generation of crucial social actors, perpetuating the beliefs of the nation state with the discourse of the "Indian problem." Neill (1937) echoes

past representations of the indigenous peoples as incapable and unappreciative of education. Similarly, MacNicol (1939) contrasts the non-government educated family who lives in substandard conditions with their returnee child who is now "bright" in order to positively portray the results of Canadian settler education. The echoing of past discourse continues to position the homogenizing Canadian education (and thus the "founding" languages) as superior and necessary. Such sentiments continue the justification of separating the individual from the family domain, perpetuating the enforcement of the national language beliefs through the school domain.

Though MPs in this period began to express issues with the residential schools, they continued to praise the establishments themselves and their concerns largely revolved around whether the children were receiving the education in a manner satisfactory for the government. MP Harkness (1945) admitted that "the Indians have suffered under a number of injustices" (p. 3383), particularly with education. Though Harkness (1945) expressed concerns with the poor accommodation of the children and the schools' limited funds which were "not enough to feed, clothe and educate a child," the crux of his argument was that "the children do not receive the education they should" (p. 3383). MP Max Campbell (1946) also discussed the Canadian government's historic shortcomings of the schools in conjunction with their current issues:

> We have slipped up badly in the education of our Indians. Many of the reserves depend entirely upon residential schools. I have nothing against the residential school because I know it is doing a lot of good work, but a larger percentage of the children on some of the reserves do not go to school because there are no day schools. (p. 1452)

Though these statements appear to have concern with the wellbeing of the indigenous people and children, Harkness (1945) and Campbell (1946), like Neill (1937) and MacNicol (1939), betray past attitudes of the "Indian problem" and the need for education among the indigenous people. Harkness' (1945) and Campbell's (1946) worries over the children are centered on whether the government education is effectively being imparted. Such discussions display the intertextual reverberations of Macdonald's "Indian problem", wherein the ideology of the nation state has evolved to assume a softer and more empathic concern for the people, though the underlying goal of assimilation through dominant language MOI still persisted.

Discussions from the 1950s possess more overt reference to this discursive change. MP William Bryce (1951) stated that "[t]he education of the Indian is a difficult problem" (p. 1358) and that the graduates were unable to use their education upon returning home. Suggesting the

"more promising pupils" be taken away for further education, Bryce (1951) concluded that such pupils would return "to act as leaders in the community" (p. 1358). MP Edmund Fulton (1958) praised the schools as noble and necessary for providing indigenous children with education (p. 4130), stating:

> When we think of the role of the residential school, I think it is desirable to remember that if it had not been for those schools and the selfless efforts made by those who have run them over the past years, we would not have had any Indian education in Canada at all. (p. 4130)

He continued that the blame put on the schools and the religious orders that run them should be directed to the Canadian government "for not having realized sooner the enormity of the problem of Indian education" (p. 4130). While Bryce (1951) and Fulton (1958) echo past sentiments of previous parliament members, they give name to the faux emphatic shift in the discourse. It is no longer the "Indian problem" but the "problem of Indian education;" educating the indigenous people is now framed as the problem, rather than the existence of the people themselves. This shift however had not produced change in the language policy itself of this period. Settler language superiority and the erasure of indigenous languages is only expressed less directly, but the state ideology is present in the MPs' statements. Bryce (1951) saw indigenous peoples as incapable of leadership without the Canadian state education, and Fulton (1958) did not view indigenous education as ever existing if not for residential schools. These sentiments thus continue the original colonial era ideology, resulting in a static set of crucial social actors and interaction order, which continues the separation of the individual from the family domain, severing mother tongue transmission in favor of dominant language education.

Support of the residential schools was not unanimous however. Arguments favoring the day schools arose in the 1940s. MP Harkness (1945), though prioritizing education over wellbeing, expressed that the indigenous people would be "better off with day schools instead of residential schools", criticizing the residential schools for separating children from their families and placing them "among a different kind of Indians, speaking a different language and so forth" (p. 3383). MP Bowerman (1949) relates similar concerns, reading the letter of an indigenous chief which states:

> Indians are unable to exercise the cruelty of depriving children of their parents as the present system of education facilities provided the Indians entails. We should have our schools right at home, where parents, teachers and the children will be in constant living contact with each other. (p. 1257)

Though similarly assimilationist, the day schools kept the family intact and allowed the use of indigenous languages in the teaching of English and French (Department of Indian Affairs, 1884, pp. xxxviii, 57). Problematising the residential schools as well, MP John H. Blackmore (1950) found "no fault with … these splendid organisations," but criticized the separating of child from parent as "far beneath the sense of British justice that every member of this house has" (p. 3946). The shift in opinion towards day schools is marked by acknowledgments of the cruelty of the system and attention to the complexities of the indigenous peoples and languages. The latter indicates a shift in language beliefs; though indigenous languages are still portrayed as barriers to the individual, they are not portrayed as in decline and bound to be replaced by a dominant tongue. Rather, the criticism of carelessly amalgamating the indigenous peoples as one and the incorporation of indigenous voices in parliament foreshadow the coming change in indigenous language policy.

5.3 1970s to present: "A national shame"

From the 1970s onwards, a shift from prior residential school discourse occurred, coinciding with the schools' decline in the 1960s and the contemporary indigenous resistance against exclusionary policies. MPs called attention to the children's dissociation from their families (Simpson, 1971, p. 9857) and their negation of cultural identity and erosion of language rights (Smith, 1978, p. 6466). The Department of Indian Affairs (1980) similarly describes a shift in their education objectives:

> To assist and support Indians and Inuit in having access to educational programs and services that are responsive to their needs and aspirations, consistent with the concept of Indian control of Indian education. To assist and support the Indian and Inuit peoples in preserving, developing and expressing their cultural identity, with emphasis on their native languages. (p. 22)

MP Jack Burghardt (1982) attributed the shift in public awareness to the "raised public consciousness of human rights and race relations" (p. 18568) after World War II, and the representation of indigenous people who influenced education policy to integrate indigenous students. The issue of dissociation now being brought to light fits along McCarty's description of language shift, where indigenous language transmission structures were displaced by dominant language MOI in the schools. Furthermore, the past stigmatization of indigenous languages and values has resulted in policy that ignored indigenous language rights and cultural identity, now resulting in the need for language revitalization.

More contemporary assessments following the closing of the schools were more stark in their descriptions, referring to them as a "grim history of past Indian policies" which "we must learn from" (Hill, 1995, p. 17370), "an absolute social tragedy" (Martin, 2006, p. 361), and "a national shame" (Schmale, 2021, p. 8270). Attention to the importance of language revitalization has also been a theme, with MP Bachand (2003) calling indigenous languages "extraordinary languages that should be saved and promoted for our international heritage (p. 9153), MP Prentice (2007) pledging support that the "[Harper] government is committed to delivering real results for the preservation of aboriginal languages" (p. 6860), and MP Ashton (2014) who stated that "youth who learn their first nations language succeed at great rates" (p. 4807), aligning with Tollefson and Tsui's (2014) positive results for learning with a native language MOI (p. 196).

The stark shift in government opinion of the schools follows the schools' closure, wherein the reversal in language management is met with a shift in languages beliefs. The interference of the state in the individual management of language is discontinued and indigenous languages are no longer actively sought to be displaced by English and French, but are shown vocal support in parliament. The language beliefs stemming from colonial ideology have been displaced with improved values for indigenous languages. Calls for revitalization of indigenous language indicate these stronger beliefs, which shows an awareness to the effects of language shift and displacement that was caused by the schools. In place of the past set of participants who perpetuated and enforced language management with harmful discourses, a new set of crucial social actors are present to replace the prior interaction order; now the actors form a unity who detail the disastrous language policy and long-lasting effects the schools had enacted. In this new interaction order, the dominant cycle of discourse produced is that of the hurtful legacy of the residential school era, which heightens in intensity with time. Yet despite these indications of support, the lack of actual policy until 2019's *Indigenous Languages Act* highlights the silence in actual change in Canadian language policy, suggesting that while colonial language beliefs which devalued indigenous languages have disappeared from the forefront, they may yet remain deep-rooted in Canadian society.

6 Concluding remarks

The research question of this paper asked: *How can the change in Canadian language policy be seen through the discourse of residential schools?* The discursive change from the "Indian

problem" to the "problem of Indian education" was the result of modernizing colonial ideology, though it resulted in little change to indigenous language policy. The stark shift in discourse where the schools are now condemned and support is pledged for indigenous languages masks a long lack of actual policy change until recently.

The early period of the residential schools saw them championed as a solution to the "Indian problem," discourse which perceived the indigenous people as inferior. On these grounds, language management between the indigenous individual and the family domain was disrupted by the nation state, prematurely advancing the individual straight to the school domain. Managed by the national government, settler languages were strictly enforced within this domain, exercising control over the individual's language beliefs, practice, and self-management. The schools were positively regarded in this period as the intention was to eradicate indigenous languages and completely assimilate the indigenous population.

Following the 1920s, concerns were raised about the schools, largely revolving around the children's education. Some threads of discussion saw that graduates had no use for the education they received, and others saw the schools not able to impart the nation's educational aims properly. These issues of indigenous education melded with the prior discourse of the "Indian problem," establishing the issue as the "problem of Indian education." This discourse largely retained the colonial era language policies that the schools began with, though a favoring for day schools marked a new leaning for indigenous language policy. Moreover, few concerns were nonetheless raised with the separation tactics and cultural erasure resulting from the schools, a theme which would grow more salient in the coming period.

From the 1970s onwards, the discourse surrounding the residential schools took a dramatic shift, unanimously categorizing them as part of the shameful legacy of Canada's history. This turn highlights the government's recognition that language loss occurred as a result of the schools and that preservation was needed. Language beliefs in indigenous languages have since shifted to become stronger within the government, with pledges and calls for supporting their revitalization, though the results are still waiting to be seen.

Further research on this topic can explore the post-1970s period in more detail, particularly from the angle of memory politics or the politics of regret as forms of transitional justice. This theoretical approach can be adopted to explore how the dramatic shift in discourse

and views regarding the indigenous peoples has contributed to the increased attention towards indigenous rights and language rights.

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